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American Research Center In Egypt, Inc.

NEWSLETTER



1430 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN EGYPT, INC.

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THE ANNUAL MEETING: A REMINDER

The American Research Center in Egypt, Inc. will hold its Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 4, 1967 in New York City.

The Middle East Institute, Columbia University has graciously offered to act as host to the members of the Center for this meeting. The Director of the Middle East Institute, Professor John S. Badeau, will serve as Chairman of the Committee for the selection of papers to be read at the meeting.

Members interested in presenting papers should submit a short abstract to:

Dr. John S. Badeau, Director
Middle East Institute
Columbia University
Kent Hall
New York, New York 10027

Speakers will be limited to twenty minutes; the abstracts should reflect the length of the paper.

Please address any inquiries concerning the meeting to the Center office at 1430 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138

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PENNSYLVANIA - YALE EXPEDITION TO EGYPT

I. Abydos 1967

By David O'Connor

In February 1967 the Government of the United Arab Republic granted to the Pennsylvania - Yale Expedition to Egypt a concession measuring some 900 by 800 meters at the site of Abydos in Upper Egypt, and work was begun immediately in the assigned area. As the Director, Professor W. K. Simpson of Yale University, was prevented by academic responsibilities from participating this season, the Associate Director of the expedition, David O'Connor of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, organized and directed the excavations.

The staff for this first season was small, consisting of Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Barry Kemp of Cambridge University, and Mr. Abdullah es Sayid, Inspector of Antiquities assigned to the Expedition. Dr. Mukhtar, Director-General of the Antiquities Service, the other officials of the Service and Mr. es Sayid were most helpful and co-operative throughout the season. We are also grateful for the assistance and advice given us by the American Research Center in Cairo. During the course of the excavation a large Expedition house was three-fourths constructed in order to accommodate an enlarged staff next season. Excavation commenced on February 17 and concluded on May 2, 1967. Throughout most of the season we had a labour force of some 140 labourers and basket boys. Our financial support came from a grant of P. L. 480 Counterpart Funds from the U. S. Government and dollar contributions from University Museum (Coxe Fund) and from Yale University (through a grant from the Bollingen Foundation to the Peabody Museum).

Our concession at Abydos includes a number of important and well-known features. These include the "Osiris Temple Enclosure", a great mud-brick enclosure (325 x 300 meters) which contains temple and stratified town remains covering all periods of Pharaonic history from Dynasty I onwards; a very large part of the cemeteries of Abydos, again covering all periods of Pharaonic history; and the remains of royal funerary complexes of Dynasties I and II. These funerary complexes are represented either by large mud-brick enclosures (the so-called "Forts"), or by large rectangles of subsidiary burials which, in some cases at least, surrounded similar enclosures and would seem to be related to the actual royal tombs (outside our concession) of Dynasties I and II at Abydos. Although considerable excavation has been carried out since the mid-19th century in

various areas of the vast site of Abydos, including areas within our concession, well over half of our concession has in fact never been scientifically excavated.

We selected the concession at Abydos for two main reasons:

i) to gain further information on the complex history of the site, famous as the major cult center of the funerary god, Osiris. This involves particularly excavation in the temple area and within the cemetery, where a special point of interest will be completing the excavation of the "Forts" and related structures and graves, already partially investigated by earlier excavators.

ii) To study several problems of more general interest to Egyptology. In particular, we believe that at Abydos stratified occupation debris spanning the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms exists, and we hope to establish a chronological sequence of Egyptian pottery types based on the excavation and study of this material. Hitherto, our knowledge of the pottery sequence has been based on the rather inadequate material from cemeteries.

This season we concentrated on the comparatively simple task of commencing the clearance of a structure formerly called "The Portal of Ramesses II".¹ Although we have only cleared part of the front area of this structure, and although it has been largely destroyed by stone-plunderers, it is clear that it is not a "Portal" but a temple with a forecourt, a portico and at least one inner court; some unusual architectural features mark it off from the known examples of Ramesside temples. Many loose inscribed blocks and fragments have been found, and confirm the fact noted by earlier excavators, that this small temple (only some 32 meters wide), was built in large part and probably founded by Ramesses II.

Over six hundred objects were catalogued, which came mostly from loose debris overlying the temple. The inscribed material includes a number of intact and fragmentary funerary stelae, various objects bearing respectively the names of a Senusret, Amenemhet III, Amenhotep III, and Horemheb, and numerous ostraca (as least 20 in hieratic and 60 in demotic). A number of sherds, originally all from bowls of a similar type, bore ink drawings and names of various gods and, as of the moment, some rather enigmatic hieratic texts. A series of small mud votive figures (rams' heads, vultures, cobras) are, with the figured sherds just mentioned, as far as I know, unique amongst material from Egypt.

The Expedition plans to return to Egypt at the earliest opportunity, conclude the excavation of the Ramesses "Portal" and begin work on some of the major problems which attract us to the site of Abydos.

¹ see: Petrie: "A Cemetery Portal". Ancient Egypt 1916. Part IV. pages 174 - 180 for the most recent detailed discussion of the "Portal."

II. Dra Abu el-Naga 1967

By Lanny Bell

From mid-February through mid-April the Egyptian Section of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania returned to Thebes, where Clarence S. Fisher conducted major excavation of Dra Abu el-Naga in the two seasons 1921 - 23. The aim of the project is the preparation of existing excavation records for the publication of 22 decorated tombs. These, mostly Ramesside in date, include three High Priests of Amun (35, 157, 283), two Viceroys of Kush (289, 300), and two Governors of the South Lands (156, 282).

The project is being organized and carried out by David O'Connor and Lanny Bell of the University Museum, with Professor J. Cerny supervising the epigraphy. This season's work was done largely by Mr. Bell, who undertook the collation of David Greenlees' copies of the inscriptions in Tomb 35 (Bekenkhons). In addition, some 1300 inscribed fragments of stone and mud-plaster, originally recovered by the excavation, were removed from open areas about the site to protection behind iron gates. The expedition intends clearance and the installation of iron gates in those tombs which need it.

Expenditures in Egypt were provided for by a grant of PL 83-480 (Counter-part) funds, as administered under the Foreign Currency Program of the Office of International Activities of the Smithsonian Institution. Dollar expenditures were furnished out of the Eckley B. Coxe Fund, the University Museum's own endowment for field work in Egypt.

A preliminary report is scheduled to appear in the December 1967 issue of the Museum's journal, Expedition.

PROFESSOR LAUER'S SEASON AT SAQQARA

By John Dorman

Professor Jean-Philippe Lauer, the well-known French archaeologist who has been excavating in Egypt for some thirty years and is particularly identified with the excavation and reconstruction of the great complex of King Zoser at the Step Pyramid of Saqqara, has this year succeeded in entering the Southern Tomb of Sekhemkhet, the builder of the Unfinished Pyramid. Last May Professor Lauer conducted Dr. Daumas, Director of the French Institute, and me on a season's end tour of his work on the behalf of the Service of Antiquities.

During 1966-1967, Professor Lauer, with approximately 65 workmen, tidied up the temple of the Pyramid of Teti, on which he had concentrated during the previous year, and excavated several tombs in the vicinity. Some additional fragments of the texts from the interior of the pyramid, some isolated inscriptions, a few shawabtis, a number of routine offering pots, and a fragment of a large alabaster jar with a ram's head handle were among his finds. He also spent considerable time in collecting additional fragments of the finely carved Pyramid Texts from the interior of the Pyramid of Pepi I. He now believes that he has recovered the greater part of these texts and that, given time and patience, the fragments can be placed in position without too much difficulty. Meanwhile, he has continued the reconstruction of Temple "T" and one of the chapels of the heb-sed court in the Zoser complex.

But during the past three years, the Unfinished Step Pyramid of Sekhemkhet has demanded an increasing amount of Professor Lauer's time and attention.

As he points out, one of the important landmarks in the archaeological history of the pyramids of Egypt was the decision of the Department of Antiquities in 1951 to authorize Zakaria Goneim, then Curator of Saqqara, to investigate a large rectangular enclosure buried in the sand to the west of the Step Pyramid of Zoser. Within a short time Dr. Goneim succeeded in clearing part of the northern section of the enclosure wall, which turned out to be in many respects a replica of the panelled wall faced with Tura limestone, which enclosed the Zoser complex. With little difficulty Dr. Goneim then located and excavated the four corners of the pyramid contained within the enclosure, the base of which measured 120 meters on each side. Only a little of the base and the core of part of the

first step remain, and it is impossible to tell how much of it was completed, but it was undoubtedly a step pyramid, planned probably for seven stages. The entrance to the pyramid lay far to the north, beginning in the form of a sloping, open trench which, at a depth of about forty feet, became a tunnel in the solid rock leading to the burial chamber. Although it was apparent that galleries and other chambers adjacent to the tomb chamber had never been completed, in the tomb chamber itself was an alabaster sarcophagus with a sliding panel that was sealed with plaster, presumably at the time of the burial of the royal owner. Although there was no trace of tomb robbers, when the sarcophagus was unsealed and opened it was found to be completely empty. Unless it could be assumed that the pyramid chamber with its precious equipment was robbed with the connivance of those in charge of the burial, it must be concluded that the sarcophagus was only a dummy and that the king was buried elsewhere.

Although gold bracelets, a gold necklace, and a small gold box in the form of a cockle shell were found inside the pyramid, the most significant find was the name of the king for whom the pyramid was built, hitherto unknown. The seal of Sekhemkhet appeared on seven jar-stoppers discovered within the structure. From other sources it appears that Sekhemkhet ruled only for a scant six years, hardly long enough for the completion of the ambitious monument he had planned for himself. This explains why the pyramid was never finished and furnishes, in Professor Lauer's opinion, a possible reason why the King may not have been buried in the funeral chamber, above which construction was still going on when he died.

The solution of the problem may be found once the entire complex has been excavated. Work at the site was abandoned in 1954, not to be resumed until three years ago, when Professor Lauer again began excavation with a small grant from the Department of Antiquities. In his Pyramids of Sakkara, published in 1961, Professor Lauer asks why the jewels were found in Sekhemkhet's pyramid if the King was never buried there, and stated that the answer to the riddle might be found by complete excavation of the entire enclosure. If Sekhemkhet's pyramid complex was patterned after Zoser's (and why shouldn't it have been, since it also was designed by Imhotep?), there must have been a southern tomb, and it was not inconceivable that the King may have been buried there rather

than in his unfinished pyramid. With this in mind, Professor Lauer ran several trenches along the southern extremity of the wall that framed the rectangular enclosure. He found nothing, and his meager funds ran out.

During 1965 - 1966, however, he continued his probing. The pyramid, he reckoned, although centered between the east and west walls of the enclosure, was considerably closer to the northern than to the southern wall. Might it possibly once have been in the exact center of a square enclosure, which was later extended southward? With this in mind, he ran a series of trenches at a distance south of the pyramid equal to the distance that separated it from its northern enclosure wall. There he found a portion of the original southern wall, with masonry inclining characteristically at an angle of 15 degrees. Centered along this wall he noticed what seemed to be a pocket of drifted sand, in which soundings revealed a large mastaba. Could this have been the actual burial place of King Sekhemkhet?

The season came to a close. But during this past season, Dr. Sarwat Okasha, Minister of Culture, agreed to allot additional funds for continuing the excavation. Most of the area had to be cleared before the shaft leading to the underground chamber could be located, for it was situated in the center of the mastaba. Professor Lauer assigned twenty men to clear the shaft, and then the work came to an unexpected halt. An accident that proved fatal to one of the workmen and seriously injured another made it expedient to stop digging for a time. The men recalled a similar fatality at the Unfinished Pyramid and remembered the premature death of Dr. Goneim, which occurred shortly after he stopped work at the site. Accordingly, rather than risk a walk-out by his superstitious workmen, Professor Lauer closed down the excavation for several weeks, resuming it only at the very end of the season. When he reached the bottom of the twenty-six-foot shaft late in May, he found that others had been there before him. There he found a small, unfinished chamber, once accessible through an inclined passageway which is now completely blocked with rubble, but which had apparently been used long ago by tomb robbers to enter and plunder the chamber. Nothing was left in the chamber but the remains of a wooden sarcophagus, too short for a human body and probably made to contain canopic jars, and three large pottery storage jars.

Thus the puzzle of what happened to the body of King Sekhemkhet is still unsolved. Although Professor Lauer believes that there is no chance of finding anything significant in the mastaba, he will begin next season to clear away the debris and to empty the passageway that provided an entry for the robbers.

Archaeology has its disappointments -- and its rewards.

THE VILLAGE AWAKES

By Ilya F. Harik

If you are traveling through the Egyptian countryside, especially the Delta, your eyes will be richly rewarded. The variety of traditional costumes is bewitching and carries you back into another era of history. Across the horizon you will see mudbrick houses piled up together, forming interesting lines for the artist, especially with the background of tall palm trees and pigeon towers that stand proudly apart.

In spite of this, in every village you will find a speck of modern civilization, like a discordant note, or perhaps an intruder. This is a small number of modern buildings, three or four at most, cut out of the heart of the village. Unlike palm trees and pigeon towers, these buildings do not stand apart, though to the artist's eye they do not seem to belong. Yet these very intruders carry inside their wings everything that makes the village run -- the cooperative society, the hospital, the school, the town hall, and the social and agrarian unit. Often some of these units are combined and are known as the "compound unit"; and this leaves you with two modern structures in the village, the cooperative society and the compound unit.

The compound unit is an idea which was conceived by social planners and is run by men of extra-village origin and source of income. The same cannot be said of the cooperative society. The idea of cooperation, it is true, is not indigenous to the village, but the village now seems to have adopted the idea and shown willingness and ability to adapt to its principles.

The co-op is run by a board of directors, all of whom are villagers elected by the members of the co-op. All cooperative societies in Egypt now have a team of experts serving them, appointed by the respective ministries. This cadre consists mainly of an agricultural engineer, an assistant who holds a diploma in agriculture, an accountant and, more recently, a manager. These offer their expert knowledge to the farmers in the village and handle complex accounting jobs. Since the government now extends credit, seeds, fertilizers, and insecticides to the peasants through the co-op, it has been found necessary that these co-ops have a number of government officials to discharge these services. The elected board of directors, though, are responsible for general policy and, above all, finances. They are a "petit parlement" and they know it. Projects, purchases, and amount of credit needed are all guarded with a cautious eye by the peasants, and the official cadres amongst them have to learn the art of persuasion to get the funds they need to run the society.

In one village in the Delta, the society was founded in 1930 with forty-odd members. Now it has 500, and three years ago it built an impressive new building as its headquarters. The village now has three co-ops, and one of them has recently started a consumer's co-op, which it hopes to see in the near future as a full-fledged society.

The friendly people of these villages are proud of their achievements under the cooperative system and point with pleasure to progress they have made. New tractors, motors for spraying, and motor pumps are some of the things they have been able to purchase out of their profits and are justifiably proud of. They are particularly pleased to know that someone has come from a distant land to take interest in their institutions, and they go out of their way to demonstrate that they are capable of modern ways of living and of managing their own affairs.

A new spirit is stirring in the Egyptian village. In ten years a silent revolution has changed the life of rural Egypt more than in five thousand years of previous history. The writer feels privileged to have been able to witness and examine this dramatic forward step.

IN MEMORIUM

Dr. Walter Federn, for many years a member of the Center, died on August 4 at his home in Queens, N. Y., age 57 years.

Dr. Federn, a scholar of wide learning, was hardly known outside of a small group of Egyptologists. He published little -- a few short articles, some important reviews, a bibliography of works in the Egyptian field for the Vatican Library -- but he was always generous in sharing his vast knowledge with other scholars with whom he came into contact. Long an invalid, he retained his zest for study to the end of his life, and the limited circle of his friends will greatly miss his ready help in scholarly problems.

It is with great regret that we must also record the loss of

Miss Evelyn G. Sears, who died on November 10, 1966, and

Miss Margaret Fish who died on February 2, 1967, both of whom were long members of the Center.

NOTES AND NEWS

Various archaeological activities have been resumed in Egypt. The French Institute was reopened early in October. Professor Jean Yoyotte, director of the Commission des Fouilles de l'Institut de France, has returned to Tanis to plan for further excavation at that vast site. The Swiss have resumed excavation at Kellia, the large monastic city in the desert west of the Delta, briefly described in Newsletter Nos. 59, p. 10, and 55, p. 10. The University of Pisa will shortly return to its concession at Soleb, this season with the cooperation of Professors Lelant and Robichon.

Professor J. J. Clere of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes is at present Wilbour Fellow at The Brooklyn Museum, where he is working on the Wilbour Papyri, a valuable collection received by the Museum at the death of Miss Theodora Wilbour some years ago, which were unrolled and mounted under the direction of Professor Serge Sauneron, who was a Wilbour Fellow of 1966.

Professor Alan Schulman, the Editor of the Journal of the ARCE, has been appointed Visiting Professor at Dropsie College, Philadelphia, which is renewing courses in Egyptology after a lapse of twenty years. Professor Schulman will continue his courses at Queens College, New York.

Professor Michel Malinine of the Ecole Practique des Hautes Etudes has been awarded the Prix Maspero by the Academie Francaise and has also received the Legion d'Honneur.

Professor H. J. Polotsky has been appointed to succeed Professor C. E. Sander - Hansen at the University of Copenhagen.

Professor W. Westendorf, formerly at the Egyptian Seminar of the University of Munich, has been appointed Professor of Egyptology at Gottingen, replacing Professor S. Schott, who has retired.

PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE CENTER

The following publications have recently appeared from the pen of Professor Alexander M. Badawy, the well-known authority on Egyptian architecture, who is at present on the faculty of the University of California in Los Angeles.

A History of Egyptian Architecture. The First Intermediate Period, The Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966.

Ancient Egyptian Architectural Design. A study of the Harmonic System. University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies, No. 4, 1965.

Architecture in Ancient Egypt and the Near East. The M. I. T. Press, 1966.

"The Prototype of the Coptic Water-jug Stand , in Archaeology 20, No. 1, January 1967, pp. 56-61.

"A Coptic Model of Shrine", in Oriens Antiquus V, Fascicle 2, Roma 1966, pp. 189-196, pl. LI.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

The Editor of the Newsletter is very desirous of receiving archaeological notes and news, short articles on subjects of current interest in the various fields of Egyptian studies, and offprints or bibliographical notes of publications by members of the Center, as well as notices of significant works published by non-members. Please address all communications to:

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